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National Report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15(a) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1*

Bahrain

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I. Introduction

1. In March 2012, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted to the Human Rights Council its second national report, which was adopted by the Council in May of the same year. In September 2012, Bahrain fully supported 145 recommendations, partially supported 13 and rejected 18 recommendations. In addition to this report, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted a voluntary report in 2014 on progress made on applying the recommendations accepted in the framework of the universal periodic review.

2. In fulfilment of its obligations, Bahrain submits its third national report on the latest developments regarding its international commitments and application of previous recommendations, highlighting its achievements in promoting and protecting human rights through an institutional, legislative and political framework, despite some challenges, including unlawful practices, acts of violence and terrorist threats that threaten the right to life and undermine the reform process. Bahrain is endeavouring to contain these terrorist practices and to confront them within a framework of respect for human rights.

II. Methodology and preparation of the report

A. Methodology

3. In application of the plan drawn up by the Kingdom since it chose to be the first State to submit a report through the universal periodic review mechanism, Bahrain has endeavoured to prepare its reports by promoting the participation of society: the Foreign Ministry held several national consultation meetings attended by government agencies, the legislature, the judiciary and civil society organizations to discuss the views of these bodies in order to prepare the third universal periodic review report. The Foreign Ministry also organized a consultation meeting with civil society organizations in which 13 associations[1] concerned with human rights took part. Some of them submitted observations and opinions, which have been taken into account in the report. This practical approach is an expression of the belief of the competent Bahraini authorities in the need to consult and coordinate with stakeholders on preparation of the report.

B. Preparation of the report

4. In this framework, the Foreign Ministry — represented by the Human Rights Section — wrote to the relevant official bodies and civil society organizations asking for their views, in particular on what had been achieved regarding the outcomes and recommendations of the universal periodic review in the human rights field during the period 2012-2016. The responses received from these bodies were discussed with government agencies and civil society organizations at several national consultation meetings. It was stressed that the information provided should be based on the principles of transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability, non-discrimination and inclusiveness.

5. The High Coordinating Committee for Human Rights[2] was responsible for preparing the report and a Foreign Ministry team, under the direct supervision of the Committee, was tasked with collecting the necessary information from governmental and non-governmental stakeholders for this purpose. It should be noted that this Committee is chaired by the Foreign Minister, includes representatives of 13 ministries and government agencies and is responsible for coordinating government agencies in all matters relating to human rights, according to the remit of each.

6. The team prepared a preliminary draft report based on the results of the discussions among all the participants at the consultation meetings and in accordance with the general guidelines for the preparation of information for the universal periodic review adopted by virtue of Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 of 18 June 2007. The draft was submitted to

all the stakeholders who participated in the consultations in preparation for its final adoption.

7. Care has been taken in the preparation of the report to group the measures taken into clusters based on the division of the recommendations as they appear in the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, entitled "Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review" (A/HRC/21/6/Add/Rev.1). Several annexes are appended for the use of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as follows:

- Annex I: A summary table of the recommendations, which follows their numerical sequence, in addition to what is indicated in the body of the report; annex II: Capacity-building and skills development for the Ministry of Justice; annex III: Training courses and academic programmes for the Interior Ministry; annex IV: Additional information on the National Human Rights Institution; annex V: Additional information on implementing measures in response to the recommendations on education and disabilities.

8. In January 2017, the High Coordinating Committee adopted the draft report and published it at the national level in various local media and on the website of the Foreign Ministry of the Kingdom of Bahrain dedicated to the universal periodic review.

III. Measures taken to implement the recommendations of the second universal periodic review (2012)[1]

A. Recommendations with full support

Treaties and international human rights mechanisms (recommendations 2, 6, 14, 54, 57, 58, 59, 66, 67, 163, 157)

9. The government agencies concerned continue to examine the issue of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and, when building national capacities, the agencies concerned bear in mind compliance with the standards of the Protocol and benefit from the knowledge of international experts such as the United Kingdom Inspectorate of Prisons and the Association for the Prevention of Torture.

10. In September 2013, the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission, an independent body, was established pursuant to Royal Decree No. 61 of 2013. There are also independent bodies that monitor places of detention and conduct visits without prior notice: the judiciary and the prosecution; the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); the Office of the Ombudsman in the Ministry of Interior; the National Human Rights Institution; and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are authorized to visit. The establishment of the Commission was welcomed by several international players, including the Association for the Prevention of Torture and the Government of the United Kingdom.

11. The question of accession to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance remains under discussion.

12. In early 2014, a technical team from OHCHR visited Bahrain for two months to hold consultations with governmental and official agencies and civil society organizations and to develop a technical cooperation and capacity-building programme. In light of these consultations, the two sides reached agreement on a cooperation project in several areas, including the capacity-building of law enforcement officers and the development of regulatory institutions in line with needs and international human rights standards.

13. The Kingdom has participated in many activities, including a training course on regional and international mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights for the staff of government agencies and civil society institutions, which took place from 16 to 18 May 2016, and the workshop held on 27 and 28 November 2016 by OHCHR in cooperation with the League of Arab States entitled "The interaction of States with

international human rights mechanisms and national mechanisms for the preparation of reports and follow-up of recommendations".

14. Bahrain has contributed $150,000 to the work of OHCHR, which will be used by its country office in the occupied Palestinian Territories to ensure respect for human rights and international law in humanitarian work.

Respecting human rights, including capacity-building (recommendations 37, 41, 93, 103, 115, 119, 123, 161)

15. Several actions have been carried out, including:

(a) The application of constitutional, legal and practical guarantees to ensure respect for the human rights of citizens and residents has been reaffirmed;

(b) It has been emphasized that all members of law enforcement agencies must observe international human rights standards when arresting or searching persons or searching homes or any other private property, reaffirming the need to treat citizens in such a way as to preserve their dignity;

(c) The necessary rules have been established to regulate the right of citizens to assemble and participate in peaceful marches, avoiding disruption of everyday life or traffic and in accordance with international standards in this regard;

(d) Steps have also been taken to underscore the efforts of Bahrain to consolidate the rule of law and ensure respect for human rights, including:

- Promulgation of Legislative Decree No. 44 of 2012 amending certain provisions of the Judicial Authority Act to ensure its complete financial and administrative independence;
- Establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman under Royal Decree No. 27 of 2012. The Office enjoys complete administrative and financial independence of the Interior Ministry and receives and examines administrative complaints concerning allegations of human rights violations by any ministry employees;

(e) The Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Religious Endowments and the Supreme Judicial Council pay particular attention to the training of all members of the judiciary, including lawyers in the Attorney-General's office, to the highest international standards of criminal justice and human rights. In this context, several memoranda of understanding have been signed with prestigious international judicial and legal training institutions and several training sessions have already been held outside Bahrain for more than two thirds of the members of the judiciary, including women working in this area. Moreover, the second phase of an intensive training programme that took place outside Bahrain has recently been completed in conjunction with one of the most prestigious NGOs with a view to upgrading the skills of all members of the judiciary in the fields of promotion and protection of human rights and criminal justice best practices;

(f) Capacity-building programmes have been introduced for judges, prosecutors and lawyers, covering, among others, criminal justice, application of the Istanbul Protocol, guarantees and rights of the accused and practical applications, which have been carried out in collaboration with local and international agencies. (See paragraph 7 for further details);

(g) The Interior Ministry has set up recruitment programmes open to all Bahrainis without exception, from all sections of society. The first group of aspiring police officers graduated in 2013;

(h) In order to improve training methods, general and specialized training courses continued to be held for all those working in application and enforcement of the law. In this context, training is provided to judges, prosecutors, members of the military judiciary and lawyers;

(i) Police training programmes pay particular attention to international standards on human rights and police work, the role of the police in applying international human rights standards in situations of emergency and civil disorder, the role of the police in

protecting human rights, and explaining the Code of Conduct for Police Officers and human rights standards in police work, and other programmes dealing with reform and rehabilitation institutions. (See paragraph 7 for further details);

(j) The following have been held: in cooperation with OHCHR, a course on the reports of NGOs and national human rights institutions for the universal periodic review; workshops for members of the Office of the Ombudsman in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross; a workshop on the investigation of serious complaints, in cooperation with Northern Ireland Cooperation Ltd (NI-CO); and workshops on the work of the High Coordinating Committee for Human Rights, in cooperation with the National School of Government International (NSGI) in the United Kingdom;

(k) In collaboration with OHCHR, training courses have been organized on the role of civil society in promoting and protecting human rights in the Kingdom, including workshops on guarantees of a fair trial, the Convention against Torture, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and other programmes. (See paragraph 7 for further details).

Constitution and national legislation
(recommendations 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 32, 33, 53, 88, 90, 146, 151, 153, 154, 160)

16. The Government has been working on the adoption of a set of amendments to harmonize the legislation of Bahrain with international standards, particularly with respect to human rights and criminal justice. The references to torture in the Criminal Code and the Public Security Act have been amended to ensure the protection of victims and the punishment of perpetrators of such offences.

17. The following have also been promulgated, for example:

- Act No. 17 of 2015 on protection from domestic violence;[4]
- Act No. 52 of 2015 amending the definition of torture contained in articles 208 and 232 of the Criminal Code;[5]
- Act No. 13 of 2016 amending certain provisions of Act No. 26 of 2005 on political associations,[6] which stipulates, among other things, that "A member shall not combine membership of an association with religious preaching, sermons, spiritual guidance or religious rhetoric, even if they do not receive a salary. Religious preaching may in no circumstances be combined with political action".

18. Confirming the role of the judiciary, several members of the judiciary have participated in setting up committees to supervise the administration of justice. The following committees have been set up:

- The Higher Committee to Oversee the Integrity of Elections;
- The Executive Committee for Supplementary Elections;
- The Appeals Committee on Decisions of the Elections Committee.

Criminal justice
(recommendations 22, 31, 42, 84, 85, 86, 87, 91, 92, 98, 100, 101, 106, 108, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 121, 122, 125, 126, 159)

19. Bahrain has recently taken important effective measures to guarantee the administration of criminal justice, reflecting its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. Under Attorney-General's Decision No. 8 of 2012, the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) was established. It is an independent body that applies international standards in the investigation of allegations of torture and inhuman treatment. The Unit has begun its work of investigation and calling to account, referring the alleged perpetrators of such crimes to the courts for trial.

20. With regard to certain legislation and the concern of the Government that there should be no impunity for perpetrators of various forms of torture, on 9 October 2012, Act No. 52 of 2012 was promulgated, amending the definition of torture contained in articles 208 and 232 of the Criminal Code. The new wording of article 208 makes it an offence to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering on a person being held with the

knowledge of a public officer or authorized agent or under the authority of such for the purpose of obtaining information or a confession or of punishing, intimidating or coercing him/her or another person. The amendment also stipulates that the statute of limitations does not apply to torture offences. The amendment to article 232 makes punishable any person who inflicts severe physical or mental pain or suffering on a person he has detained or who is under his control for the purpose of obtaining information or a confession or of punishing, intimidating or coercing him/her or another person. The amendment also stipulates that the statute of limitations does not apply to torture offences.

21. All the judgments handed down by the National Safety Courts have been reviewed, either through the civil courts by appeal or through the special judicial committee set up by the Supreme Judicial Council to examine them on the basis of the report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). As for the charges relating to freedom of expression, in line with the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry report, the prosecution has dropped all charges that interfere with the right to and exercise of freedom of expression, namely, charges of inciting hatred against the ruling regime and broadcasting false news or rumours that could undermine security and public order. As a result, several cases have been definitively resolved and 334 defendants have benefited from the withdrawal of those charges. However, some cases are still in progress, despite the withdrawal of these charges, because they concern other offences of a different nature involving acts of violence and sabotage against persons and property.

22. Furthermore, the Government of Bahrain has adopted a Civil Settlement Initiative to compensate victims of the events of February and March 2011 on the proposal of the National Committee formed to oversee implementation of the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report, without prejudice to the right of those who do not accept the proposed out-of-court settlement to resort to the civil courts and not affecting any criminal liability. The Civil Settlement Office has paid compensation in 48 cases: the 35 cases mentioned in the Commission of Inquiry report and thirteen other cases not mentioned in the report that the Committee considered required compensation. An assessed budget for compensation in two phases was adopted totalling 2,880,000 dinars (BD), i.e. more than $7,658,000, for all the cases for which the Committee approved compensation. The sums have been disbursed in full to those who have accepted civil settlement. Regarding the physical injury cases, the National Committee examined the applications made to the Civil Settlement Office and determined their right to compensation. The final report on those cases has been published and indicates the degree of injury in each case. On this basis, BD 324,000, the equivalent of $861,000, has been disbursed to 47 physical injury cases.

National Institution for Human Rights
(recommendations 34, 35, 36)

23. Following a series of wide-ranging consultations with relevant civil society organizations and the legislature — the Council of Representatives and the Shura Council and their committees —, and in response to the recommendations of the National Institution for Human Rights, Act No. 26 of 2014 establishing the National Institution for Human Rights was promulgated, and amended by Legislative Decree No. 20 of 2016. It reaffirmed the independence of the National Institution and its compliance with the Paris Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. The National Institution thus has broad powers to promote and protect human rights and enjoys legal, administrative and financial independence. The members of the Board of Commissioners enjoy immunity in relation to their rights work, while the inviolability of the headquarters of the Institution has also been decreed. The Act gives the Institution authority to monitor and receive complaints, to provide legal advice and to conduct field visits to any public place suspected of being the site of a human rights violation, grants the possibility of wider access to information and gives it authority to take decisions without influence or interference from any other agency. (See paragraph 7 for further details.)

Implement all recommendations of the BICI (recommendations 28, 43, 45, 56, 99, 107, 124, 127, 128, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 145, 162)

24. The Government has paid particular attention to this matter and taken all legislative and executive measures for full implementation of the recommendations. Royal Order No. 48 of 2011 established a National Commission[7] to implement the recommendations. This Commission has embarked upon the tasks entrusted to it transparently and fairly. In the same context, the Cabinet issued a decision to set up a body to oversee implementation of the recommendations. It is composed of a group of experts working under the direct supervision of the Minister of Justice, liaises with all the relevant ministries and government agencies and verifies implementation of the general framework established by the National Commission.

25. As a result of the foregoing, complete implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry recommendations has been declared. For example, in this context, the obligation to reinstate students dismissed from their universities and return employees to their jobs has been implemented and the civil settlement of cases of death and physical injury has taken place without prejudice to the right to resort to the competent courts. The Special Investigation Unit has been set up in the public prosecution office, the Office of the Ombudsman in the Interior Ministry and the Office of the Inspector-General in the National Security Agency. The judgments handed down by the ordinary courts have been reviewed, several laws have been amended, in particular the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Criminal Code, while the training of judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers and lawyers has been overhauled. The principle has been laid down that houses of worship should be built for all lawfully and in their allocated places according to approved regulatory conditions and without infringing citizens' property rights. The Government has also taken some additional measures, such as the establishment of the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission, to ensure that they are not subjected to violations. It should be noted that these mechanisms enjoy a high degree of trust among citizens because they carry out their mandate and work with independence, transparency and neutrality.

26. In the framework of the evaluation of the judgments handed down by the National Safety Courts to review the legal status of the accused in these cases and ensure that the judgments complied with international human rights standards, on 2 January 2012, the Supreme Judicial Council issued a decision establishing a judicial committee to review the final judgments handed down by the National Safety Courts in order to guarantee the right of the accused to a fair trial. This resulted in a reduction of sentences, some convictions being quashed, the release of some convicted persons and the expiry of conviction of some others. The prosecution dropped all charges that interfere with the right to and exercise of freedom of expression, which terminated several cases.

27. In response to the recommendation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry to speed up compensation for those harmed, two mechanisms have been implemented:

- Specialized courts were established to hear compensation claims under Decree No. 13 of 2012 organizing the work of the National Victim Compensation Fund;
- A five-member committee was set up to oversee the work of the National Victim Compensation Fund.

28. To compensate those harmed by the events, the Government sought effective alternatives to resolve their situation through speedy procedures in implementation of recommendations 1725 (b) and 1722 (j and k). The Civil Settlement Initiative was adopted on the proposal of the National Committee set up to oversee implementation of the recommendations, without prejudice to the right of those who do not accept the proposed out-of-court settlement to resort to the civil courts and not affecting any criminal liability. The Government took several effective measures: in the light of the decision of the Cabinet at its meeting of 4 March 2012 tasking it with measures for the civil settlement of compensation for those harmed by the events of February and March 2011, the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Religious Endowments began to accept requests for civil

compensation with effect from 18 March 2012. The Civil Settlement Office received a total of 63 requests for compensation for death and 434 for compensation for physical injury.

29. By virtue of Ministerial Decree No. 13-2 of 2012, the competent committee of the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Religious Endowments studied the claims for compensation for death and physical injury and the Civil Settlement Office paid compensation in 48 cases, including the 35 cases mentioned in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report and thirteen other cases not mentioned in the report. The Committee estimates that it has disbursed a total of BD 2,880,000, equivalent to more than $7,658,000 in these cases. The sums have been disbursed in cash and in full to those who have accepted civil settlement. It should be noted that these sums have been disbursed regardless of criminal cases against defendants and of the judgments in those cases and without prejudice to the right of those harmed who do not accept the proposed out-of-court settlement to resort to the civil courts.

30. The Committee also studied applications for compensation submitted to the Civil Settlement Office for cases of physical injury incurred during the events of February and March 2011. The Committee asked senior forensic pathologists at the forensic evidence department to examine all the cases of physical injury in order to establish the cause of the alleged injury, the degree of disability and whether the injury was likely to have been sustained on the date alleged. In light of the reports the Committee received from the forensic pathologists, it estimated the appropriate compensation for those cases in proportion to the disability and paid compensation to the injured. The Committee compensated 47 of the cases of physical injury for which an application for civil settlement had been submitted, disbursing a total of BD 324,000, approximately $861,000.

31. Regarding the rebuilding of religious facilities mentioned in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report, the Government of Bahrain is eager to provide the right climate for freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. The right of all citizens and residents of Bahrain to practise religion is guaranteed and maintained under the Constitution. Accordingly, the Government grants permits for the construction of places of worship in a manner compatible with the laws on ownership of land, building permits and other administrative regulations in force approved by the authorities concerned. Their protection is guaranteed by the laws regulating this matter.

32. In order to put this regulatory system into effect, the 30 facilities that violated regulations and are referred to in the Commission of Inquiry report have been demolished. According to the report, they were built of makeshift materials without licences in a manner inconsistent with the detailed approved zoning scheme and on land some of which belongs to private persons, some to the Government, with the exception of just five built on land zoned for places of worship that were built and put into operation since 2013. The other 25 pinpointed in the report were, as mentioned above, built without permits. His Majesty the King issued instructions for all of them to be rebuilt. In implementation of these instructions, following adjustment of their positions as required and to meet the needs of the local people, they have been rebuilt in accordance with the regulations and with a completion rate of 100 per cent.

33. It should be noted that Ministry of Justice statistics indicate that 608 places of worship, prayer halls and mosques and 618 funeral halls for men and women are supervised by the Department of Shia Religious Endowments, while 440 mosques and prayer halls are supervised by the Department of Sunni Religious Endowments, including 91 events halls.

Women and gender equality
(recommendations 39, 48, 50, 51, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77)

34. Article 5, paragraph (b), of the Constitution stipulates: "The State shall ensure the reconciliation of the duties of women towards the family with their work in society, and their equality with men in the political, social, cultural, and economic spheres, without violating the provisions of Islamic law (Sharia)".

35. The Legislative Decree amending certain provisions of the Court of Cassation Act allows appeals to the Court of Cassation on provisions of Sharia.

36. The Legislative Decree amending certain provisions of the Judicial Authority Act added the Court of Cassation to the Sharia judicial structure.

37. Article 2, paragraph 2, of the Royal Order setting out the rules on the appointment of members of the Shura Council concerns the adequate representation of women.

38. Bahrain continues its efforts to promote gender equality and ensure women's political, social and economic place in society. It is therefore working to promulgate and amend certain laws, such as the draft amendment to the Social Security Act adding the children of Bahraini mothers married to foreigners to its beneficiaries, the amendment of certain provisions of the Legislative Decree on unemployment insurance in order to increase the amount of benefit, and the amendment of certain provisions of the Power of Attorney Act so that power of attorney over the property of minors may be granted either to the father or the mother, whichever is best qualified.

39. A Legislative Decree has been promulgated amending certain provisions of the Sharia Courts Procedure Act requiring domestic disputes to be submitted for settlement or reconciliation to the Domestic Reconciliation Office, which is composed of psychologists, social workers and lawyers, before they are brought before the Sharia Court.

40. Article 334 of the Code of Criminal Procedure has been amended to stop application of the death penalty to pregnant women.

41. The National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women 2013-2022 has been launched. It has five main lines that seek to ensure family stability within the framework of family cohesion, to give women the necessary capacity to contribute competitively to the development process on the basis of the principle of equal opportunities, to integrate the needs of women into development by giving them the possibility to distinguish themselves in their performance and to progress in their aspirations with a view to improving their quality of life and promoting lifelong learning. Interaction and collaboration with partners and allies complementing the institutional work takes place through the Supreme Council for Women, the national house of expertise in women's affairs.

42. The National Plan has been included in the government work programme for 2015-2018, which was adopted by the Council of Representatives during the fourth legislative term in January 2015.

43. The Women's Support and Information Centre has been established. It is a place in which to focus on and tackle the situation and problems of Bahraini women and foreign women married to Bahrainis by directly receiving their complaints and questions, examining their situation and helping to solve the problems they face through the various means and mechanisms available.

44. The economic empowerment of women has been promoted. The Supreme Council for Women has launched a series of training and rehabilitation programmes in the framework of several projects that aim to provide women with the skills and technical knowledge needed to set up or run small projects or engage in entrepreneurship. In cooperation with state institutions, it has also launched several initiatives and programmes for the provision of consultancy services and facilities for the economic empowerment of women, such as the establishment of the Bahrain Women's Capacity Development Centre, Riyadat, as an economic incubator for women providing all training, advisory and promotional services for entrepreneurs. There are also mechanisms that provide support and financing under favourable conditions, such as the Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Investment Fund, to support and finance the commercial activities of Bahraini women. (See paragraph 7 for further details.)

45. In order to promote the political empowerment of women, the Supreme Council for Women launched the permanent integrated programme for the empowerment of women in the political sphere, which focuses on networking with all stakeholders and the relevant institutions to implement training and outreach for women wishing to participate in public affairs. The programme was developed after the 2002 elections and up to 2016. These efforts have contributed to the arrival of several women in the Council of Representatives and on municipal councils.

Family law
(recommendations 49, 138, 139)

46. The Family Provisions Act (Section I) has been issued and applied to the Sunni Chamber of the Sharia Court. The Government is currently working on a draft unified law on family provisions.

47. In cooperation with the Supreme Judicial Council, the Supreme Council for Women has conducted a study of the effect of application of the Family Provisions Act (Section I) in the Sharia Court.

48. A set of brochures has been published to explain in simple terms the articles of the Family Provisions Act (Section I) and to provide information about legal services for women. Awareness programmes and media campaigns have also been conducted to raise awareness of the main provisions of the Act (Section I) and the importance of expediting the promulgation of Section II.

49. Ongoing programmes are implemented on family education and legal education aimed at young couples to raise the level of awareness and understanding of the requirements of domestic compatibility and of the local legislation and international agreements that support and instil positive attitudes towards women's issues.

Nationality
(recommendations 75, 95, 96, 140, 141, 142, 143)

50. The Supreme Council for Women pays particular attention to the subject of the children of Bahraini women married to foreigners and seeks to improve their situation through its contribution to taking the necessary measures to access the basic services available to citizens.

51. The Cabinet has issued a decision approving a draft law amending certain provisions of the Bahraini Nationality Act of 1963, allowing Bahraini citizenship to be granted to the children of Bahraini women married to foreigners under specific rules and criteria. It has been referred to the legislative authority in accordance with constitutional and legal procedures.

National legislation on education and disabilities
(recommendations 38, 46, 52, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172)

Education

52. Article 2, paragraph (a), of the Constitution stipulates: "The State shall safeguard the sciences, the humanities and the arts and shall encourage scientific research. The State shall also guarantee educational and cultural services to its citizens. Education shall be compulsory and free in the initial stages as determined and provided by law. The law shall lay down the necessary plan to combat illiteracy".

53. In the framework of citizenship and human rights education and curriculum planning for the various educational stages and classes in government and private schools, the principle of equality of opportunity is one of the essential foundations underlying curricula, syllabuses, textbooks and all other teaching aids and materials. One of the features of this approach is the incorporation of positive discrimination in favour of the most vulnerable social groups, and specifically for the benefit of those with disabilities.

54. Regarding education for people with disabilities and special needs, all such students enjoy special educational support and teaching in educational establishments, including:

(a) In 2015/16, an integrated educational curriculum was applied for the rehabilitation of students with mental disabilities and Down syndrome;

(b) Students with special needs, cancer patients, sickle cell anaemia patients and deaf students are cared for during final examinations by placing them under a special board and the provision of special facilities and any other measures their condition requires;

(c) Rehabilitation centres provide rehabilitation services for students with minor and non-severe mental disabilities and cerebral palsy to enable them to be integrated in ordinary government schools;

(d) A rehabilitation centre has been established for people with mobility disabilities and cerebral palsy;

(e) Educational curricula and assessment systems and means of support have been intensified for all students with special needs in the school system;

(f) Three private educational establishments (three schools) have been licensed to teach students with special needs following a curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education;

(g) A centre for the assessment and diagnosis of disability and a special centre to meet the needs of people with disabilities for training, job search and labour market integration have been opened;

(h) Work is in progress on the completion of nine rehabilitation centres in a comprehensive disability complex.

Disability

55. The rights of people with disabilities receive a great deal of attention in Bahrain, which was among the countries that worked on implementation of the Arab Decade of Disabled Persons, adopted by the League of Arab States. Under Decision No. 3 of 2005, a national decade of disabled persons committee was set up. Bahrain acceded to Arab Labour Convention No. 17 of 1993 on the Rehabilitation and Employment of the Disabled by virtue of Legislative Decree No. 3 of 1996.

56. The National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities was launched on 3 October 2011, with cooperation and coordination between the Higher Committee for Disabled Affairs, the Ministry of Social Development and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It is a comprehensive and integrated strategy based on a range of field studies and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Bahrain acceded in 2011, and seeks to ensure that people with disabilities obtain full rights on an equal basis with others, achieve comprehensive integration and receive the best care and development. A road map was drawn up for application of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Strategy has seven main lines, including information and awareness, which has several strategic directions for implementation, including:

(a) Building a suitable media structure to promote a social and rights approach to disability;

(b) Setting up an effective coordinating subcommittee to oversee information, awareness and disability programmes.

57. The Strategy also includes an economic empowerment component with several strategic directions:

(a) The establishment of a fund to support the participation of people with disabilities in the national economy;

(b) Activation of the role of the Ministry of Labour in the employment of persons with disabilities.

(See paragraph 7 for further details.)

Police training in respecting human rights (recommendations 89, 102, 104, 105, 109, 130)

58. Bahrain has demonstrated keen interest in continuing to support capacity-building of the Bahraini police in the context of the obligation to respect human rights in law enforcement. The Interior Ministry has therefore worked hard to improve police capacities by tackling various aspects of their training in several local and external courses, including:

(a) Local conferences and training courses:

- Four courses on human rights for public security forces: 87 participants;
- Four courses on human rights in policing: 213 members of the security forces participated;
- A course on the legislature and supporting and promoting human rights in Bahrain: 250 participants;
- A course on effectiveness of the application of human rights in the security services: 119 participants from Bahrain, in addition to participants from several other Arab countries;
- Eight courses on the role of the police in safeguarding human rights: 152 participants;
- A training course explaining international human rights law and the international treaties signed by Bahrain: 22 participants;
- A course explaining the Code of Conduct for Police Officers: 443 officers and 8,832 enlisted men;
- Two courses on substantive and procedural controls on the use of force in administrative detention: 54 participants from public security;
- Two courses on criminal investigation to fight crime and practical application of the criminal law: 47 participants;
- A course to train trainers to explain the Code of Conduct for Police Officers: eight officers participated;
- A course on the disciplinary liability of public employees in Bahraini law: 21 participants;
- A course on trafficking in human beings: 22 participants;

(b) Participation in courses and conferences abroad:

- Five training courses in Italy on technical assistance for police officers: 102 participants;
- Course 21 of the Human Rights Council in Geneva: six participants;
- Three courses on human rights in several Arab countries: 29 participants.

(c) Organization of the Second Arab Police Scientific Forum, Human Rights Practices in Security Agencies, in cooperation with Naif University for Security Sciences, held from 20 to 23 January 2013: 84 participants from the Interior Ministry and 35 other participants — a total of 119 participants from Bahrain;

(d) The Interior Ministry issued Decision No. 14 of 2012 on the Code of Conduct for Police Officers, which includes principles for law enforcement officers aimed at promoting a human rights culture. The Interior Ministry also issued Decision No. 24 of 2014 on basic principles on the use of force and firearms.

(See paragraph 7 for further details.)

The rights of the child (recommendation 29)

59. The Child Act (No. 37 of 2012) was issued in implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Bahrain has acceded. On 18 February 2016, Decision No. 4 of 2016 was issued on restructuring the National Committee for Childhood, which was first set up in 1999 and is responsible, among other things, for overseeing implementation of the National Childhood Strategy Action Plan and assisting agencies concerned with childhood to develop and promote projects and programmes that serve and guarantee the rights of the child.

60. In 2013, the National Childhood Strategy 2013-2017 was launched. It is geared to the characteristics, needs and requirements of this age group and to the characteristics of the

society and its culture, which is based on Sharia. The Strategy was developed on the basis of the findings of an analysis of the status of the child in Bahrain in 2010/11.

The media and the press
(recommendation 25, 30, 93, 147, 148, 149, 150, 152, 155, 156, 158)

61. Access to information and the Internet is a constitutional and legal right. A new draft law on the press and electronic media is in preparation to promote the freedom and independence of the press and electronic media establishments in accordance with international rules, especially the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It prohibits any calls to violence or hatred, any threats to national security or public order, any violation of the rights, reputation or dignity of others or public morals and any violation of human rights principles. It enhances the right of journalists to express their views safely and independently in the framework of the Constitution and the law, including the guarantee of the right to access information and circulate it.

62. Executive and judicial measures have been taken to prohibit any incitement to sectarianism and violence, national or religious hatred or racism in the media, in accordance with the Criminal Code, as amended, the current Press Act, which was promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 47 of 2002 and reaffirmed in the draft press and electronic media law, and the international conventions acceded to by Bahrain.

63. Shared national values and a spirit of tolerance and peaceful coexistence are promoted under the Press Charter, adopted in January 2012, the Audio-Visual Media Charter and the Media Conduct Handbook (June 2012), according to a sophisticated media strategy that protects professional ethics in line with global standards.

64. The High Authority for Information and Communications was established in June 2013 to promote responsible freedom in the media in accordance with the professional and ethical rules set out in the Media Charter and international rules prohibiting incitement to sectarianism or religious, racial or sectarian hatred in order to achieve the higher interests of the nation, protect national security and preserve the unity, safety and stability of the community.

65. The Kingdom of Bahrain supports the right of journalists to fulfil their mission freely and independently and punishes any assault on them with the penalties laid down for assault of a public employee under the provisions of articles 29-34 of the current Press Act, which was promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 47 of 2002, which guarantees that no journalist may be arrested, imprisoned, intimidated, oppressed or humiliated for exercising the legal and constitutional right to freedom of expression. The right of the victim of any unlawful practices to take legal action is guaranteed.

66. The Government continues to promote the right of journalists to express their views safely and independently within the framework of the draft press and electronic media law, which will be referred to the legislature. This draft law makes provision for many advantages, including freedom of the press, printing, publishing and electronic media, and the independence of journalists. An opinion originating from a journalist or true information published is not a reason for breach of his/her security nor is it permissible to force him/her to disclose sources of information. Journalists also have the right to obtain information, statistics and news from their sources that it is permissible to publish by law. Insulting or assaulting a journalist because of his/her work is an offence punishable by the penalties laid down for assault of a public employee. A journalist may be dismissed only after an independent professional committee has been informed of the grounds for dismissal; it will then seek to reconcile the parties. The provisions of the Private Sector Employment Act are applied to dismissals. Professional rules on the rights and duties of journalists are laid down in the framework of the Press Charter.

67. According to the Measuring the Information Society Report published by the International Telecommunications Union in 2014, Bahrain ranks first in the Middle East and North Africa and 27th in the world for access to, use of and skills levels in information and communications technology. It is one of the first countries in the region to have liberalized this sector. The prevalence of mobile telecommunications services exceeds 183

per cent of the total adult population of 1.3 million, and Internet services 129 per cent. More than 541,000 persons use Facebook, 250,000 Twitter and 120,000 Instagram.

Human rights defenders
(recommendations 147, 150, 156, 158)

68. The following should be noted in this connection:

- Freedom of opinion and expression are general rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the law;
- Legislative Decree No. 21 of 1989 on private social and cultural associations and clubs, private bodies working in the youth and sports sectors and private institutions is applied in the framework of legal safeguards;
- The Ministry of Social Development is working in cooperation with and with the support of civil society organizations to establish the National NGO Support Centre and to support and encourage voluntary work. The Centre aims to provide various aspects of support and development to civil society organizations. Its objectives include:
    - Improve the performance and enhance the capabilities of civil society organizations;
    - Develop civil action to meet the needs and aspirations of society;
    - Support and encourage voluntary work; and
    - Encourage and support community partnership between the governmental, civil society and private sectors.

69. Bahrain welcomes the entry of journalists and foreign media in accordance with international standards and the criteria for the granting of visas. More than 60 accredited foreign correspondents reside in the Kingdom, while a foreign correspondents and media club was established in Manama in 2005.

Combatting human trafficking and labour law
(recommendations 76, 94, 97, 164, 165, 173, 174, 175, 176)

Combatting human trafficking

70. The Human Trafficking Act was promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 1 of 2008. In application of its provisions, the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons was set up and is currently chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of the Labour Market Regulatory Authority, its membership including representatives of the relevant ministries. Its objectives include devising programmes to prohibit and combat human trafficking, protecting the victims of human trafficking from renewed victimization and overseeing implementation by the governmental authorities concerned of the recommendations and guidelines contained in the conventions and protocols on combating human trafficking to which Bahrain is a party.

71. To assess the status of foreign victims of trafficking in persons, a committee has been established that is chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and includes representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry General Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Residence and the Labour Market Regulatory Authority. The committee examines all reports concerning victims, hears their statements or their legal representatives and removes any obstacles that may prevent foreign victims obtaining work if this is deemed necessary on the basis of what the chair of the committee has been told by the competent authority in this regard. It coordinates with the Interior Ministry to return victims to their country of nationality or their place of residence in any other State if so requested, recommends whether it is appropriate for a victim to remain in Bahrain, adjusts their legal situation to enable them to work and refers this recommendation to the Minister of the Interior for approval. If the recommendation is approved, it is subject to review under the same procedure at least every six months.

72. The committee has opened a shelter for men and another for women exposed to trafficking in persons. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development is also building an integrated centre for victims of human trafficking with a capacity of more than 120.

Labour law

73. The Private Sector Employment Act (Law No. 36 of 2012) includes domestic workers in several of its provisions, such as those on employment contracts, protection of wages, end-of-service benefits, the right to annual leave, exemption from litigation costs and individual dispute settlement procedures.

74. Bahrain is a leading country in the Arab region in many areas of protection of foreign workers, including the right to change employer and to unemployment insurance, in addition to the prohibition on working in open places in the sun in the afternoon in July and August, a measure that benefits expatriates since most workers on construction projects are foreigners.

75. In the framework of the Private Sector Employment Act, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, in cooperation with the other agencies concerned, oversees the inspection of the accommodation employers provide for the expatriate workers they employ.

76. In cooperation with foreign embassies and clubs, the Ministry seeks through activities, awareness campaigns and guidance to spread awareness among foreign workers. It issued Ministerial Decision No. 40 of 2014 on the requirements and specifications of workers' housing and, in collaboration with the governorates and relevant agencies, has formed fieldwork teams to compile an inventory of buildings and accommodation that are a danger to residents and their visitors.

77. In April 2017, a pilot scheme will be introduced granting work permits without a sponsor to 48,000 foreigners. The scheme, which is part of the labour market reform project, will then be evaluated. In this way, Bahrain seeks to eliminate the causes of violation of the employment system, concealment and the black market in visas and work permits. This system will correct the situation of 8 per cent of the workers on the Bahraini labour market.

Social services
(recommendations 44, 47, 144)

78. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development oversees the implementation of social services programmes and has established a shelter and social assistance centre for women who are victims of domestic violence and a House of Dignity for beggars and vagrants where they are provided with various types of assistance in coordination and cooperation with relevant ministries and agencies. In addition, the Child Protection Centre now provides psychosocial and legal services, and health, development and preventive programmes to improve children's skills and abilities so that they are able to protect themselves and know their rights, and also to improve the skills and abilities of parents to protect their children. A free telephone hotline (with the number 998) has been set up for aid and support of the child.

79. Voluntary work is encouraged and the Ministry contributes to the Community Social Action Fund, which has an estimated budget of more than BD 300,000, to provide support to civil society organizations and institutions, matching their provision to social development projects, which are assessed by experts. The Ministry has allocated two thirds of the Fund to projects associated with national kinship. Sixty-five NGOs benefited from the financial grant programme in 2013, 66 in 2014 and 48 in 2015.

80. Every year the Ministry of Labour and Social Development National Centre for NGO Support organizes training workshops, meetings and conferences to promote the capacities of community-based organizations, of which there are more than 600. Over 90 workshops and conferences were held between 2013 and 2016.

81. A centre has been established to develop the capacities of volunteers by creating and organizing volunteering opportunities and training volunteers.

82. Social collaboration between the governmental, civil society and private sectors is encouraged and supported. The national centre periodically assesses civil society organizations involved in running development projects and programmes that come under the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, which include:

- The shelter for the victims of domestic violence;
- The House of Dignity, which provides social assistance;
- Mobile units for people with disabilities; and
- Day centres for parents in various parts of the country

National dialogue
(recommendations 40, 55, 129, 131)

83. The National Social Dialogue Conference was held from 2 to 25 July 2011. Its outcomes included several recommendations, including on the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities, the situation and challenges of Bahraini women, and the situation, challenges and care of persons with disabilities. The Conference also recommended: amendments to the Constitution, which have been approved by the legislature, to reorganize the relationship between the executive and legislative branches in such a way as to emphasize the balance between the two; the application of additional safeguards when the King uses his right to dissolve the Council of Representatives and appoint members of the Shura Council; strengthening the role of the legislative authority to express confidence in the Government chosen by the King; and additional safeguards for the role of the Council of Representatives meeting to discuss questions to ministers.

84. The National Dialogue was consistent with the governmental and social approach the Government has constantly reaffirmed, promoting the participation of all sections of society, official and non-official bodies, in the process of reform and comprehensive sustainable development and accelerating delivery in light of the national unity of the Bahraini people and their social values.

85. The political aspect of the National Dialogue was examined for a full year in 2013 and 2014 under the leadership of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister. It ended in agreement upon a set of basic principles. Parliamentary and municipal elections were held in December 2014, when there was broad popular participation, 52.6 per cent of the electorate voting in the parliamentary elections and 60 per cent in the municipal elections.

B. Recommendations with partial support

86. Partial support for a recommendation means support for part of it and taking note of the other part, either because it conflicts with Sharia, the Constitution or national legislation, or because it requires further study.

International human rights treaties
(recommendations 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65)

87. Royal Decree No. 70 of 2014 has been promulgated amending certain provisions of Legislative Decree No. 5 of 2002 approving accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and reformulating certain reservations of the Kingdom of Bahrain on the Convention. The amendment states the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to implementing the provisions of articles 2 and 16 of the Convention, without prejudice to the provisions of Sharia. Bahrain's absolute reservation with regard to article 15, paragraph 4, has become a commitment without prejudice to the provisions of Sharia. These amendments have been approved by the legislature.

88. The question of accession to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is still under discussion. It should be noted that, although Bahrain is not yet a party, the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry applied the standards established in the Convention when it carried out its investigations

into a series of allegations of enforced disappearance that were received in 2011 (including the period of the state of national safety). As a result of the investigations, all the allegations were rejected because no case of enforced disappearance could be verified. (Independent Commission of Inquiry Report, paragraph 1304.)

89. Bahrain is eager to cooperate with all the various international human rights mechanisms, such as the treaty committees, special rapporteurs, working groups and OHCHR, in addition to the special procedures, including:

(a) Bahrain is keen to cooperate fully with all mandate holders in the framework of special procedures and the Government continues to discuss the issue of certain mandate holders visiting Bahrain;

(b) Bahrain has responded to the allegations, urgent appeals and questionnaires received from special rapporteurs;

(c) Technical cooperation and capacity-building programmes with OHCHR in the human rights field began to come into effect in 2016.

C. Recommendations that have been noted (recommendations, 1, 4, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 110, 120)

90. Bearing in mind what was explained in the response of the Kingdom of Bahrain to these recommendations, where possible, Bahrain has taken the measures it can to apply the standards it has accepted. Regarding the question of its accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on abolition of the death penalty, there has been no change in Bahrain's position on this matter. The death penalty is imposed only in serious and dangerous situations, Bahraini law provides significant safeguards regarding its imposition and execution, and it is imposed only for a limited number of criminal offences. The Criminal Code provides the possibility of commutation of the death penalty to life imprisonment or a shorter period of imprisonment if the offence was committed in circumstances that justify commutation.

D. Normative and structural framework for the promotion of respect for and protection of human rights

91. The positive impact of the measures Bahrain has taken, including those mentioned above, to support the basic mechanisms for promoting respect for and protection of human rights is reflected in structures and legislation and in the introduction and implementation of policies and programmes that have ensured significant achievements in the areas of comprehensive development, through the steady encouragement of respect for and protection of human rights. In particular, these measures are supported by the normative and structural framework for promotion of respect for and protection of human rights, which is outlined in the following paragraphs.

1. Charter

92. The National Action Charter was issued in December 2000 and, on 14 February 2001, was adopted by a referendum on the draft charter, which resulted in the approval of 98.4 per cent of Bahrainis. The Charter places special emphasis, among other things, on determining present and future national lines of action and political and economic principles that support the democratic approach of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

93. The Charter sets out the principles that govern Bahraini society, describes the historical character of Bahrain, explains the basic elements of the society and the system of governance and parliamentary life. It also sets out the economic and social foundations of society, national security and Gulf and foreign relations.

2. Constitution[8]

94. The Constitution sets out rights and freedoms, affirms the principles of equality and the rule of law and organizes the relationship between the three branches of the State, the executive, the legislative and the judicial. Bahrain made important amendments to the Constitution in 2002 and 2012.

3. The law

95. The law guarantees rights and freedoms. Legislation and amendments thereto are promulgated in the framework of respect for the Constitution, through approval of the relevant decrees, including:

- The Private Sector Employment Act (No. 36 of 2012), which deals with several issues, including the employment contract, the protection of wages, end-of-service benefits, the right to annual leave, exemption from litigation fees and individual and collective dispute settlement procedures;[9] several of its provisions cover domestic workers;
- Act No. 34 of 2014 amending certain provisions of Act No. 26 of 2005 on political associations, which stipulates, among other things, that: "The funds of associations shall be considered public funds for the purposes of application of the provisions of the Criminal Code and the persons in charge of an association's affairs and those working for it shall be considered public servants for the purposes of application of the said Code"; "If the association has violated the provisions of the Constitution, this Act or any other law or its statutes, the Minister of Justice may ask the High Civil Court to order cessation of the association's activity for a period not exceeding three months during which the causes of the offence shall be removed"; and "the association shall not use religious preaching to promote or refer to its principles, objectives or programmes";
- Legislative Decree No. 23 of 2013 amending certain provisions of Legislative Decree No. 17 of 1976 on juveniles;[10]
- Legislative Decree No. 68 of 2014 amending certain provisions of Act No. 58 of 2006 on the protection of society from terrorist acts,[11] which stipulates, among other things: "The Office of the Prosecutor shall directly order that all data and information relating to the accounts, deposits, safety deposit boxes and safes at banks or other financial institutions or transactions related thereto be investigated or obtained, if that is necessary to uncover the truth in any of the offences set forth in this Act";
- Legislative Decree No. 22 of 2013 replacing article 11 of Legislative Decree No. 18 of 1973 on public meetings, marches and rallies, as amended, which stipulates, among other things, that a ruling must be issued by the competent court determining civil and criminal liability if, during the meeting or march of which it has been notified, there is a breach of public security or public order or harm to a third party or public or private property; and
- The Bahraini Nationality Act[12] of 1963 and the amendments thereto,[13] the recommendations of the National Council[14] and relevant decisions.[15]

4. International human rights obligations

96. The Kingdom of Bahrain has reaffirmed its commitment to guaranteeing respect for and protection of human rights by accepting international obligations on this matter, including:

(a) The accession of Bahrain to seven of the nine core international human rights conventions, including the International Covenants on Human Rights, and the Arab Charter on Human Rights;

(b) The publication of Cabinet Decision No. 01-2368 approving the signing by the Kingdom of Bahrain of the statutes of the Arab Court of Human Rights, which was established on the initiative of Bahrain and is an independent Arab judicial body that aims

to strengthen the will of States parties to implement their obligations regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(c) Bahrain supported the Gulf Cooperation Council Human Rights Declaration issued by the High Council of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf at the conclusion of its 35th session on 9 December 2014;

(d) Bahrain supports the regional Arab human rights mechanisms established in the framework of the Charter of the League of Arab States, such as the Arab Standing Committee on Human Rights, and implements the Arab Plan for Human Rights Education.

5. Authorities and official bodies concerned with human rights, include:

97. The legislative authority, consisting of the Council of Representatives and the Shura Council, each of which has a human rights committee.

98. The judiciary, which, among other things, guarantees the right to litigation and judicial assistance.

99. The executive safeguards the interests of the State, outlines the public policies of the Government and oversees their implementation and the functioning of the apparatus of government.

100. Since the Foreign Ministry is the essential link between all the players concerned with the vital question of human rights, a Department of Human Rights Affairs[16] was set up in the Ministry under Legislative Decree No. 68 of 2016. The Foreign Minister chairs the High Coordinating Committee for Human Rights, which represents an important step towards integration and coordination among all the parties concerned with human rights and support for bilateral cooperation and cooperation with the United Nations in the framework of Bahrain's commitments.

101. The High Coordinating Committee for Human Rights has been established, the objectives of which include examining subjects related to the protection and promotion of human rights.

102. The Office of the Ombudsman has been established.[17] It enjoys administrative and financial independence and works in the Interior Ministry to ensure compliance with the laws of Bahrain, the professional standards of policing set forth in the Code of Conduct for Police Officers and the administrative regulations that govern the performance of civil servants, within a general framework that includes respect for human rights, the consolidation of justice and the rule of law and gaining public trust. It exercises its powers and duties with complete independence regarding complaints submitted to it about any military or civilian employee of the Ministry of Interior in the event of commission of a misdeed concerning, during or owing to the performance of his/her duties, and notifies the competent Interior Ministry authority so that disciplinary measures can be taken against the perpetrators or notifies the public prosecution office in cases that constitute a criminal offence. It also notifies the complainant and the subject of the complaint in a statement setting out the steps taken to examine the complaint and the findings. The Office of the Ombudsman Act was amended in 2013 to extend significantly the scope of its powers, including the requirement to notify it of deaths that occur in places of confinement and detention. The Office of the Ombudsman issued its first annual report in April 2014.

103. The Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission[18] has been set up to monitor prisons, detention centres, centres for the care of juveniles and detainees and other places in which people may be detained, such as general and psychiatric hospitals, to verify the conditions of detention and the treatment inmates receive in order to ensure that they are not subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment. The Commission carries out its duties with complete freedom, impartiality, transparency and independence.

104. In implementation of the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, the Special Investigation Unit[19] was set up in the public prosecution office under Attorney-General's Decision No. 8 of 2012 to investigate cases of death, torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. The Unit is independent and publishes monthly reports on its work on social media. It has referred 51 cases to the criminal courts and 100 defendants

for trial, including 17 officers, and appealed against the verdicts handed down in 19 cases. In the cases in which the accused was found guilty, the sentences imposed range from one month to seven years in prison.

6. National mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights, include:

The Supreme Council for Women[20]

105. The Supreme Council for Women was established under Royal Order No. 44 of 2001, comes directly under the Council of the King of Bahrain, has a legal personality and is independent. It serves as a reference regarding women's affairs for all official agencies and expresses opinions and makes decisions on matters directly or indirectly concerning the status of women. It is made up of 16 female members, who are public personalities, experienced in women's affairs and various activities and represent all sections of Bahraini society.

106. The Council carries out many activities in accordance with plans studied, including the National Plan for Advancement of Bahraini Women[21] 2013-2022. Its general secretariat has set up working groups to oversee implementation of all aspects of the Plan, such as the stability of the family, equal opportunities, lifelong learning, quality of life and the house of expertise. The secretariat working groups have begun field visits to key allies and partners in implementing the Plan in accordance with the priorities adopted, which are executive institutions closely linked to the basic outcomes of the work of the Council, so that the programmes and projects carried out by these institutions and which form part of its work programme have a budget allocated for the next two fiscal years.

National Human Rights Institution[22]

107. Following wide-ranging consultations with relevant civil society organizations and the two legislative authorities — the Council of Representatives and the Shura Council — as well as the advice of several legal experts, Act No. 6 of 2014 establishing the National Human Rights Institution was promulgated on 24 July 2014. It was amended by Act No. 20 of 2016 to reaffirm its independence in line with the Paris Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. (See paragraph 7.)

Institute for Political Development[23]

108. The Institute was established by Decree No. 39 of 2005, amended by Decree No. 41 of 2008 and Decree No. 81 of 2009. Within the fundamental framework of constitutional and legal principles, the Institute has several objectives, including spreading a culture of democracy, supporting and establishing the concept of sound democratic principles, providing training, studies and research programmes on constitutional and legal matters to different groups of people, and disseminating and developing political awareness among citizens in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the principles of the National Action Charter.

109. In addition to the foregoing, there are national committees, including:

- **The National Committee for the Development of Education and Training**, which oversees the quality control of educational outcomes and their suitability for the job market;
- **The National Committee for Childhood**, membership of which includes representatives of governmental authorities and relevant civil society organizations. It is concerned with everything to do with children;
- **The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking**, the members of which are from government agencies and civil society organizations concerned with human trafficking. It oversees implementation of the Human Trafficking Act (Law No. 1 of 2008); and
- **The Committee against Hatred and Sectarianism**,[24] which proposes and adopts policies and methodologies and develops effective programmes to tackle the problem of hate speech, which may be propagated through religious preaching, in

books, through the media, communications and education or through political and societal forces. It seeks to instil a spirit of tolerance, reconciliation and coexistence and promote the unifying factors in Bahraini society.

7. Non-governmental organizations

110. The Kingdom of Bahrain affirms the importance of the work of NGOs in encouraging respect for and protection of human rights. The number of NGOs in the country is increasing and reached 607 in November 2016. It should be noted that in the last three years four new rights associations have been established,[25] in addition to the nine already in existence. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development is preparing a law on non-governmental organizations to support the work of these institutions. The Ministry also works through the Community Social Action Fund, which has an estimated budget of more than BD 300,000, to provide support to civil society organizations and institutions, matching their provision to social development projects, which are assessed by experts. The Ministry has allocated two thirds of the Fund's budget to projects associated with national kinship. Sixty-five NGOs benefited from the financial grant programmes in 2013 and 66 in 2014.

8. National policies and strategies

111. Bahrain has drawn up several national plans and strategies that guarantee, assist, propagate and promote human rights at the national level. These include:

(a) Government Programme of Action 2015-2018[26]

In the preparation of its work programme (2015-2018) entitled "Towards the justice, security and well-being of society", the Government of Bahrain adopted the principle of balance between the potential and resources of Bahrain, the challenges it faces, the requirements and needs of citizens and residents, continued development and construction and an emphasis on the sustainable development of the Kingdom, at the same time taking care to promote individual rights, freedom of opinion and expression and respect for human rights and to work within a framework of constitutional and legal legitimacy.

In that sense, it is also taking the necessary steps to complete its review of legislation, laws and regulations in order to ensure that they comply with Bahrain's obligations under international and regional conventions and treaties to promote freedom of opinion and expression and human and individual rights and combat discrimination in all its forms.

Through the Programme of Action, the Government is endeavouring to bring about a society in which justice, security, stability and prosperity prevail, building upon previous achievements in a framework that ensures sustainable development and provides the necessary services to citizens, diversifies the national economic base, enhances competitiveness, develops an investment climate and strengthens the role of the private sector and human resources, as Bahrainis are the pivot, essence and engine of development.

The aims of the programme include the protection of the democratic political system and comprehensive development.

(b) Economic Vision 2030[27]

In October 2008, a comprehensive economic vision for the Kingdom of Bahrain was launched to give a clear direction to the continuing development of the Bahraini economy, which, in essence, reflects the fundamental common objective of building a better life for all Bahrainis. Economic Vision 2030 was launched after four years of intensive talks with a wide range of opinion leaders in the public and private sectors, including government institutions, specialized institutions, advisory institutions and global bodies. It focuses on the formulation of a vision of the Government, society and the economy based on the three essential guiding principles of sustainability, justice and competitiveness.

(c) **National Development Strategy 2015-2018**[28]

The National Development Strategy was prepared in connection with Economic Vision 2030 and is a road map for the national economy and government action. It focuses on consolidating the links between government policies and identifying the most important strategic initiatives to be implemented during this period.

(d) **National Childhood Strategy 2013-2016**;[29]

(e) **National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2012-2016**;[30] and

(f) **National Strategy for the Elderly**.[31]

112. Policies and measures have also been introduced to encourage respect for and protection of human rights. These include:

(a) Establishment of the High Authority for Information and Communications under Decree No. 47 of 2013;[32]

(b) The launching by the Supreme Judicial Council of a "future judges" project to train candidates for the judiciary in the capabilities and competencies needed by members of the judiciary.

IV. Challenges and obstacles

113. Bahrain continues its efforts at every level to encourage respect for and promote the protection of human rights, despite the challenges it faces, which include:

(a) The tense regional situation and the growing danger of extremism and terrorism, which have an impact on Bahrain and place an additional burden on the authorities that have to deal with the consequences;

(b) Attempts by some to exploit human rights issues wrongfully as a means of achieving narrow political objectives, while others resort to acts of violence and terrorism that threaten the right to life and hinder efforts towards stability and comprehensive development. Bahrain is resisting this by all legal means and in a framework of respect for human rights;

(c) Limited natural resources and the developments and disorders the world and the region have witnessed, including the global financial crisis, which hampered government efforts to consolidate economic growth and stability.

V. Voluntary commitments

115. Bahrain is working on:

(a) The promulgation of a consolidated law on family provisions;

(b) Putting in place family courts with all the judicial facilities and services related to the family, including taking due account of the specificity and nature of family disputes.

116. Work is under way on a new law on the press and the electronic media.

117. Bahrain is considering amending the Bahraini Citizenship Act to grant citizenship to the children of Bahraini women married to foreigners in accordance with the rules regulating the granting of citizenship.

118. The application of policies and programmes on comprehensive and sustainable development continues. Bahrain will submit its first report on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to be held in New York in July 2018.

119. Increased awareness in all areas of human rights is being promoted through the available means, including education and the media.

120. Within two years of the adoption of the universal periodic review report, Bahrain will submit a voluntary report on what has been accomplished.

VI. Conclusion

121. Bahrain is submitting its third report to the universal periodic review and reiterates its continued commitment to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms within the framework of its National Action Charter, the Constitution, legislation, its international obligations and the policy and programmes of the Government, and its intention to continue its efforts to build on the achievements in this area in terms of legislation, policy and action. We refer in this regard to what the political leadership of the country affirmed on the occasion of Human Rights Day, 10 December 2016, when it affirmed its continued attention to achieving the various dimensions of comprehensive development, including the support and promotion of a culture of human rights through education and the media in order to strengthen community-building and to establish the foundations of a civilized society in which everyone enjoys their rights in accordance with the principle of the rule of law. In particular, the values of coexistence, tolerance, acceptance of others and equality have been the pillars of Bahraini society throughout the ages and have made Bahrain a homeland for all the different cultures and civilizations it has assimilated.

122. Bahrain looks forward to continued cooperation with the Human Rights Council, benefiting from interactive dialogue in the framework of the universal periodic review mechanism, and closer cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other interested parties to achieve the common goal of securing respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Notes

[1] جمعية رعاية الطفل والأمومة، جمعية مبادئ لحقوق الإنسان، الجمعية البحرينية لحقوق الإنسان، جمعية نهضة فتاة البحرين، الاتحاد النسائي البحريني.
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